

Shescape Charged with Race
Discrimination by N.Y. Lesbians

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Gay Books:

A Writer Trashes the Industry
that Produces the Trash



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After bar raid Chicago Queers Sue Cops

By Ben Robbins and
Stephanie Poggi

CHICAGO — Three patrons of a gay bar raided September of 1985 filed a \$15.75 million lawsuit against police on December 12, 1986. The suit charges the Northeastern Metropolitan Enforcement Group (MEG), a special division of the Illinois Department of State Police with five counts of violation of the patrons' constitutional rights — namely, unlawful detention, illegal search, invasion of privacy, denial of equal protection, and denial of right to association.

A class action part of the suit seeks "confidential return or destruction of all information and photographs" taken by MEG officers during the three-hour raid at Carol's Speakeasy. The three plaintiffs are being represented by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Illinois.

On the night of September 12, 1985, bar patrons of Carol's Speakeasy were forced at gunpoint by 15 plainclothes MEG officers to lie face down on the floor. The officers searched each of the 50 customers and demanded, among other personal data, names, addresses, employers, marital status, bank and credit cards. The officers also seized the bar's membership files and photographed each person before he or she could leave.

Patrons allege that they were not told they had the right to have an attorney present during the interrogations, nor that they had the right to remain silent. Some patrons who had lifted their heads off the floor claim they were struck by the officers, and that others were called "queers" and "faggots."

During the raid, uniformed Chicago police officers entered the bar and made no effort to stop the raid, according to the suit. The officers, whose identities are not known, are also named as defendants in the case.

According to Harvey Grossman, legal director of the Illinois ACLU, MEG had an arrest warrant for only one person, the bartender, who was later arrested in his home on a drug charge. None of the other patrons was found to possess drugs.

Apparently, the only departmental action against the MEG officers involved in the raid was a transfer of two supervisory personnel back to their original units. Grossman, who described the reprimand as insufficient, said he hopes the suit "will send a message to local police [to stop] discriminatory practices at gay bars."

Such harassment in Chicago suburbs has been common for some time, according to

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Shescape Productions charged with discriminatory policies

New York City Lesbians Organize to Protest Racial Discrimination

By Nancy De Luca

NEW YORK — Lesbians here are organizing against the allegedly racist admission policies of Shescape Productions. Shescape is a sponsor of local women's events and until recently owner of a lesbian club. As of October, 1985, Black and Latina lesbians have reported difficulty in gaining entrance to Shescape events. In recent months, women have banded together to picket the production company and to file complaints against it with the New York Commission on Human Rights (CHR). All of the women protesting Shescape have chosen not to use their full names in the press.

BJ, an organizer of pickets at Shescape events and a member of the newly formed Committee of Outraged Lesbians (COOL), told

GCN she was discriminated against in October of 1986. She said she attempted to enter a Shescape event at the Manhattan club "Private Eyes" with a group of five other Black women and one white woman. All of the women were held in the waiting area of the club after being informed that Private Eyes was temporarily crowded. After the group waited about 15 minutes, a woman who was apparently a Shescape employee told the women that she had "instructions from headquarters" not to let too many Blacks in. When questioned by the group, she repeated the statement, according to BJ.

BJ then wrote a letter describing her experience to *Womanews* of New York City, and subsequently

helped to organize a picket of 60 people at Private Eyes on December 20, 1986. The demonstrators demanded that Shescape Productions publish a formal apology in the lesbian and gay press and post a non-discriminatory admission policy on the outside door of all events and in all publicity.

BJ has also filed a complaint of racial discrimination with the CHR.

Joni Rimn, owner of Shescape Productions, told GCN that Shescape "never has and never will discriminate. . . . All [our] parties have plenty of women from all walks of life." When asked about the alleged incident at Private Eyes in October, Rimn said BJ's account is untrue. Commenting on the statements attributed to the

woman at the door, she said, "You'd have to be an idiot to say something like that."

Rimn said Private Eyes has a capacity of 300 people and that over 800 showed up on the evening in question. "Tons of women were turned away that night, and if anything was said, it was probably something like, 'We've reached our quota,' — meaning that the club was full."

A group of six other women have also filed a complaint against Shescape with the CHR. Three of the women who are Black said that in April of 1986 they were denied entrance to Shescape's now-defunct club where they intended to meet several white friends. Nancy K., who is 27 years old, was denied entrance on the basis of her I.D. She said she had used the same identification card at the club in January of 1986. After discussing the matter with the man at the door, she was told that her attire — slacks, leather shoes and a blouse — didn't meet the dress code. When two white women wearing blue denim and sneakers left the club, she asked the doorman to clearly state the dress code. In the meantime, according to Nancy K., several white women were allowed in without I.D. checks.

The group of Black women finally left, and later on met up with their white friends who had been admitted to Shescape without being carded. One of the white women, who was wearing raggedy jeans and sneakers, was told when she was admitted that she shouldn't dress like that in the future.

When asked about the door policy, Rimn said that Shescape will admit "any woman over the

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Het. focus and not a word about birth control

Condom Ads Make TV

By Kim Westheimer

SAN FRANCISCO — A man and a woman are holding hands as the sunset looms before them. A dispassionate male voice states, "The Surgeon General says the best protection against infection now, barring abstinence, is the use of condoms. This is a box of Trojans. Use it in good health. Trojans for all the right reasons."

This television commercial, clearly geared towards heterosexuals and consciously avoiding mention of birth control, has broken network television's tradition of not advertising condoms.

"AIDS is such a major problem that it wasn't a difficult decision to make," said Javier Valencia, public affairs coordinator for KRON in San Francisco. On January 15 KRON became the first major network station to announce that it would run condom commercials. A Trojan ad was aired for the first time on January 27, directly after President Reagan's state of the union address.

While the Catholic church and anti-abortion groups have complained about the commercial, Valencia said response to it is two to one in favor. But in deference to such constituencies, KRON will not run condom commercials which focus on birth control.

KRON announced it will donate all of the profit from condom commercials to AIDS research. In addition, as a stipulation for running the condom commercials they are requiring manufacturers to make similar donations. Valencia said he expects \$50,000 in profits on the Trojan ad to go to the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and the American Foundation for AIDS Research.

The heterosexual focus

Trojan has no plans to make condom ads which depict gay men. Trojan spokesperson Susan Smirnoff told GCN the company decided not to portray gay users of condoms in their commercials because "the ads were designed to be tasteful and thoughtful and have general appeal. We wanted to create them so they would be ac-



A sample from Trojan's TV ads

cepted by stations and viewership."

In addition, said Smirnoff, "[Condoms] are effective against infection when used properly. A condom's proper use is for vaginal intercourse."

It is uncertain whether KRON would accept condom ads with gay content. Such decisions will be made on a "case by case" basis, said Valencia. "The gay press is doing a good job of covering the issue [of condoms and AIDS]." It wouldn't be necessary to run a spot geared towards the gay community, said Valencia.

The beginning of a trend

Other television stations have jumped on the condom bandwagon. According to Valencia, stations in Detroit, Indianapolis, and Seattle decided to air condom commercials following KRON's lead. Ansell America, makers of Lifestyle condoms, is also marketing television commercials.

In Boston, WLIV/Channel 56 announced on January 27 that it would run the Trojan commercials. "Of course it's a way we can make money," said Jim Byrne, creative services director for the station. "But it's also a public service. . . . AIDS has a lot to do with it for us. TV stations throughout

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DC Insurers Retaliate v. HIV Test Ban

By Jennie McKnight

WASHINGTON, DC — The insurance industry here lobbied hard last year against what would become the nation's strictest law banning the use of HIV tests by insurance companies. At the time, there was a discussion about whether companies doing business in the District of Columbia would pull out of the market if the legislation passed. (See GCN, Vol. 14, No. 7)

According to a forthcoming report by two Howard University professors, the exit from the D.C. market has begun. Martin Weiss and James Chastain called 50 of the 604 firms licensed to sell insurance in D.C., and found that 41, or 82 percent of those called, had quit writing life insurance policies for individuals.

The 50 companies studied wrote about 40 percent of all individual policies sold in 1985 in the District,

and include the largest national companies — Prudential, Metropolitan Life, Aetna and State Farm.

Steve Smith, chairman of the Metropolitan Committee on AIDS Issues, said he thought any attempt to modify or repeal the D.C. law would be unsuccessful. When asked about the likelihood of engaging the industry in dialogue about the feasibility of writing individual policies in the District again, Smith said companies would need to be motivated by similar legislation in larger jurisdictions. "If New York, Massachusetts, or Connecticut were to pass a law, or if California strengthened its law, then we might see something."

Weiss said his study did not include any questions about health insurance policies, which are also subject to the new D.C. law.

News Notes

quote of the week

"La Cage aux Folles is not a gay show."

— Peter Marshall, star of the national touring company, as quoted in the Oregonian via just out of Portland, Oregon.

nail salon charged with aids bias

WEST HOLLYWOOD, CA — A Sunset Boulevard fingernail salon that refused to give a pedicure to a hairdresser with AIDS has become the first business to be charged under West Hollywood's AIDS anti-discrimination law, according to the San Juan *Star*.

According to City Attorney Michael Jenkins, Jessica's Nail Clinic, which caters to celebrities, violated a year-old city ordinance barring businesses from denying employment, housing and services to people with AIDS. The discrimination charge is a misdemeanor.

Thirty-five-year-old Paul Jaspersen brought the complaint. Jaspersen, a hairdresser at another West Hollywood salon, contends that his July 24 pedicure appointment at Jessica's had been cancelled after a manicurist there overheard him tell a friend of his recent AIDS diagnosis. After the cancellation, he tried to make later appointments but was told by the owner, Jessica Vartoughian, that none were available.

Jaspersen's experience with the salon has left him angry about "people's unreasonable fear of AIDS." "They hurt my feelings. . . . People with AIDS are real people with real feelings," he said.

Jenkins and other attorneys familiar with similar anti-discrimination laws in other cities said the charges could become the first legal test of efforts to protect people with AIDS from being denied equal access to commercial service.

— Barbara Siegel

clark u. bans bias

WORCESTER, MA — The Clark University Gay, Lesbian and Straight Alliance has announced the inclusion of sexual or affectional preference within the school's Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Statement. Promotion of the new Equal Opportunity Statement was coordinated by Clark University's Affirmative Action Office, interested Alumni, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Alliance and other progressive student organizations.

A formal grievance policy has been established within the Affirmative Action Office to deal with discrimination claims by students, staff and/or faculty based on sexual orientation. The Affirmative Action Office, Dean of Students and Health Service of Clark University are also formulating a formal university-wide AIDS non-discrimination policy.

— Andrea Ellis and Dominic Carota

rawhide boys

NEW LONDON, WI — A "Boys Ranch" for "juvenile delinquents" is seeking legislative exemption from a state law which prohibits discrimination against lesbians and gay men.

In an interview in the Milwaukee *Journal Magazine*, John Gillespie, founder of Rawhide Boys Ranch, said, "The temptations for a homosexual would be obvious — boys running around in their skivvies. . . . any parents would object to that, and the rights of the boys and their parents must take precedence." But, lamented Gillespie, "it's somewhat in vogue to give special attention and consideration to the alternative lifestyle, which five years ago we would have called the *deviate* lifestyle. We don't dare do that now."

Rawhide only hires married heterosexual couples to be house parents. And although Gillespie claims that "there is no 'Rawhide religious belief' that staff have to adhere to," only people who profess "a belief in Jesus Christ," are hired. There are no Black staff or residents at Rawhide. According to Gillespie, none have ever applied.

There are sure to be strong feelings on both sides as the Rawhide battle heats up, writes Dick Jones in the *Journal Magazine*. "One side feeling as it does about homosexuals, will argue blindly for morality and forget the wrongs of discrimination. The other side, feeling as it does about fundamentalists, will argue blindly for gay rights and overlook what success Rawhide has achieved."

— Kim Westheimer

boston alliance election results

BOSTON — The Boston Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance has elected its 1987 officers. Will Hutchinson will serve a second term as chair, as will Ann Sanders as vice-chair. Terri Ortiz was elected secretary, C. M. Deucher is treasurer, and Don Gorton will become chair of the recently formed Alliance Political Action Committee.

Hutchinson offered a "State of the Alliance" address at the Alliance's annual meeting on January 12, focusing on the Alliance's work to hold local elected officials accountable — "from Governor Dukakis to [Boston Mayor] Ray Flynn to the minions of [Senate president] Billy Bulger."

— Stephanie Poggi

pompeii's sailors' orgies

POMPEII, Italy — Gay erotica has been uncovered by archaeologists digging here. The unearthed remains of a sailors' bathhouse reportedly include five murals depicting all-male orgies.

The Weekly News of Miami reports that the relics are expected to end up in a private, locked chamber at the National Archaeological Museum of Italy where only "genuine, unemotional art scholars" will be allowed a viewing.

Erotic objects of Italy have been stored in the special chamber since 1819 when King Francisco I ordered that all such material be removed from public view.

— Sharon Haase

move over barbie

MIAMI — Barbie move over and make way for Grace, the "anti-abortion doll." The creation of Praise Unlimited, a Florida-based company, Grace sells for \$39.95, according to *Out!* of Wisconsin. Among Grace's specialties are singing "Jesus Loves the Little Children." She also spouts such pithy lines as "God knew me before I was born," and "I used to be a little person inside my Mommy's tummy. Now I'm all big!"

— Barbara Siegel



Niek Engelschman, one of the founders of the primary Dutch organization of lesbians and gay men, receives a royal decoration from Elco Brinkman, coordinating minister for lesbian and gay affairs, on the occasion of the Dutch group's 40th anniversary, December 7, Amsterdam.

no more tiptoeing through the tulips

TUPELO, MS — Bible thumpers here are hoping enforcement of sodomy laws will clear the town of gay people according to *The Weekly News* of Miami. A group called "Morality in America" has urged town leaders to use the state's sodomy and underage drinking laws to crack down on the local gay bar, Tulip Creek Estates Clubhouse Disco and Show Bar.

The group's leader, T. K. Moffet, has denounced the bar as a "threat to the moral fiber" of Tupelo. A local Christian radio show host has also gotten interested in the anti-gay campaign. Host Bob McCuston recently stated, "Our desire is to see these people [gay people] helped. Our secondary desire is to see the bar closed."

— Sharon Haase

trial date set in gay assault case

BOSTON — A trial date will soon be set for a man accused of assaulting a gay man in August of 1985.

On January 20 of this year a grand jury indicted Robert Livingston who allegedly attacked Edwin Light. (See *GCN*, Vol. 14, No. 25). Livingston is also accused of using Light's credit card two days after the attack.

— Kim Westheimer

reputed lesbian forced to quit job

CHARLESTON, W. VA — This state's Supreme Court has ruled against reinstatement for a teacher who was pressured to resign due to allegations of lesbianism, according to the Washington *Blade*. The high court's decision upheld a lower court's ruling.

In 1983, Linda Conway, a teacher at a kindergarten in Hampshire County, resigned after the local community rallied against her. Parents had been complaining about her "masculine" appearance since 1980, as well as about her alleged relationship with another female teacher. In 1982, the parents circulated a petition condemning Conway's "way of life [as] not morally acceptable or in the best interest of the children." Subsequently, 400 people attended a county school board meeting to oppose Conway's continued employment as a teacher.

At the same time, the state Attorney General issued an opinion that school boards had the right to ascertain a teacher's sexuality from public opinion alone and the right to dismiss any reputed homosexual on grounds of "immorality."

In Conway's appeal to the state Supreme Court, she argued that her resignation occurred under duress, that the jury in the lower court had not been adequately instructed about the law of duress, and that she was entitled to reinstatement and back pay.

Her attorney, Robert Bastress, argued that the state Attorney General's opinion and the resulting court decision granted the school board "a carte blanche for arbitrariness. . . [which] will necessarily chill teachers from exercising their constitutional and statutory rights." He also argued that community beliefs and "mere opinion" had been given unprecedented power to "terminate teachers and ruin their livelihood."

The state Supreme Court upheld the lower court ruling against Conway, stating that they could not conclude that "the jury verdict was contrary to the evidence nor that the trial court erred in instructing the jury."

international women's day video

BOSTON — A group of women producers from the greater Boston area are soliciting video tapes by and about women for the Third Annual International Women's Day Video Festival. The festival will be cablecast live on March 8, 1987, from 12-5 p.m. on the Boston Neighborhood Network, channels A-3 and A-8.

Tapes may be either ½" or ¾", in English or Spanish. Regional and national distribution is planned. Deadline for entries is February 1, 1987. Mail entries with a self-addressed, stamped mailer to: International Women's Day, Box 176, Boston, MA 02130. For more information, contact B. W. Lee, (617) 524-6058.

— Stephanie Poggi

minn. bans bias v. queers, pwass

MINNEAPOLIS — Governor Rudy Perpich has issued an executive order prohibiting the state from discriminating against gay men, lesbians and people with AIDS (PWAs), according to the *Equal Time News*. The order, issued Nov. 19, was not made public until December 3, when it was disclosed by openly gay State Senator Allan Spear.

The order bans state employers from discriminating on the basis of sexual preference in recruitment, hiring, promotion, tenure and salary, and compels them to "provide a work environment free of harassment, which is a form of discrimination."

The order covers all agencies, departments, boards and commissions that are part of the executive branch of state government. The ban is based on state rights of privacy and freedom from discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation.

Under the order, the state is also required to treat employees with AIDS as it treats workers with other long-term diseases such as cancer, according to commissioner of employee relations, Nina Rothchild. Workplace HIV-testing is banned as is "removal from normal or customary status. . . except for clearly stated and specific medical and/or public health reasons." A spokesperson for Perpich said that to date, there are no known PWAs employed by the state.

— Barbara Siegel

Police in Nicaragua Town Question Gay Men

By Cyndi Norman

EL VIEJO, Nicaragua — Gay men in this small northwestern town in the Chinandega region are being questioned by local police in what appears to be an attempt to stave off AIDS. The men are asked general questions, the names of their gay friends, and required to bring police two photos of themselves. It is not known if other towns are also questioning gay men.

Almost no information on AIDS in El Viejo is available; according to gay men here, neither they nor heterosexuals know how it is spread or who can catch it. While national media usually reprints only international bulletins of research on the "disease of homosexuals and drug addicts," accurate AIDS information is reportedly more widely available in bigger cities such as Managua.

Nicaragua has no national law against homosexuality, although some gay men report mandatory exemptions from military service because of their sexual preference. Recent public discussion of gay people has often been positive. In addition, the national press has condemned the U. S. Supreme Court's recent decision in the Georgia sodomy case.

According to Alvaro, a gay high school student and one of the men

questioned about 80 men have been called in by El Viejo police thus far. El Viejo has a population of approximately 25,000.

Alvaro said a notice was delivered to his house in early November of last year, asking him to appear at the police station on a specified day at 9 a.m. The reason given on the notice was "reply to the charges." He said four to five other men appeared for questioning on the same day he did.

Alvaro was asked his age, school, and the names of other homosexuals in El Viejo. When asked the reason for the questioning, a police officer told him, "It could be for your health and security."

Mercedes, a 25-year-old gay man who works in a local restaurant was walking by the police station also in November, when police called him in off the street. Although he was late for work, police questioned him for approximately 20 minutes. He said they asked his parents' names, his income, and when he "became homosexual." The police officer told him El Viejo has a disproportionate number of homosexuals, that there are two cases of AIDS in El Viejo and they don't want any more. Gay men here say they are not aware of any cases of AIDS in Nicaragua.

Also in Nicaragua, three police officers came to the house of another gay man and took him to the station for an hour of questioning. The gay man, Alex, (not his real name), is 17, a high school senior, and well-known in the town. He said children mutter "faggot" as he passes and gay men and lesbians come to him for matchmaking.

Alex said the police chief told him, "We don't like you homosexuals walking around in the street because we don't want to see your immoral acts. And we don't want vulgar homosexuals because if you're like that the children will take on your ways."

Alex reports that he was asked his age, the age at which he became gay, who his friends were, where he studied and worked, and why he liked men. The officer also asked him how he felt about being gay, about his relationship with his family and other gay men, the ages of men he preferred and the frequency of his sexual contacts.

Editor's Note: Cyndi Norman is interested in finding out more about AIDS phobia in Nicaragua. Anyone travelling to Nicaragua who would like to contact her can write c/o GCN.



Martin (L), a gay man waiting to be questioned by police, and Alex (R), in front of El Viejo police station, Nov. 21, 1986.

Condoms on TV

Continued from page 1

the day run soaps with people going to bed with no regard to the spread of diseases. Why not be responsible and show [people] using condoms?"]

WLIV was presented with four Trojan commercials to choose from: the one mentioning the Surgeon General; one where a man says he's twenty-four and single, he meets a lot of nice "girls" but realizes that a lot of bad things are happening to nice people these days; one with a young woman who says she doesn't always know the history of people she goes out with; and one which obliquely refers to birth control by depicting a couple who has to "make choices" in their lives.

WLIV plans to run the first ad, which talks "in terms of the spread of infectious disease," said Byrne. "We're not in the contraceptive business. This is a heavily Catholic area. We're very sensitive to all types of audiences."

Not the best venue

As a result of the current condom commercial controversy, a number of stations have reaf-

firmed their unwillingness to run such spots. Gil Schwartz, Director of Corporate Communications for Westinghouse Broadcasting, said his company reviewed their longstanding policy against running condom commercials and decided to maintain that policy. Westinghouse Broadcasting owns stations KYW of Philadelphia, WJZ of Baltimore, KDKA of Pittsburgh, WBZ of Boston and KPIX of San Francisco.

"We don't think 30-second commercials are the most proper venue for public education," said Schwartz. "At the same time, we're very concerned about the issue of public information and the responsibility of broadcasters to make sure the public understands...the new notion of what condoms can be used for. We're encouraging stations to develop public education [through] public service announcements and local programming."

Sy Yanoff, the president and general manager of WLIV in Boston has stated, "AIDS is a problem that's not going to go away.

As responsible broadcasters we have a responsibility to examine any kind of public service announcements or commercials that surround a major issue such as the one we're talking about." Station spokespeople refused to comment further on the station's policy.

Chicago

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Grossman, who said it could "ultimately eliminate places lesbians and gay men frequent."

Grossman said a separate federal suit has also been filed against police for harassment through I.D. checks at the now-defunct suburban Chicago bar, Bubbles. Bubbles "was forced to shut down," said Grossman, because of the police harassment.

The ACLU will begin gathering evidence and depositions in the Carol's Speakeasy case in February.

—filed from Boston

New Bedford women rebuild

Women's Center Falls to Fire

By Kim Westheimer

NEW BEDFORD, MA — Women are mobilizing to rebuild the women's center here which was seriously damaged by a January 20 fire. The fire has caused the thirteen-year-old center to temporarily relocate.

According to Debra Robbins of the center, arson is not suspected. The fire may have been started by a smoldering cigarette in the cellar of the four-floor building.

The women's center runs a battered women's shelter, rape crisis services and a women's health project. It is the only place in New Bedford where teenagers can get contraceptives without parental permission. The center is multi-

cultural, said Robbins, and aligned with a variety of progressive movements, including labor, lesbian and gay liberation, abortion and anti-apartheid.

Messages of support for the center have been coming in from across the state. Several fundraising events are being planned to help renovate the damaged building. Assistance is crucial because the center's insurance will not cover all costs, said Robbins.

"It's very sad, but we're fighting and not giving up," said Robbins. Donations to the center may be sent to The Women's Center, 252 County Street, New Bedford, Massachusetts 02740.

Shescape Discrimination

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age of 23 with proper attire. This means no sneakers, neat clothing...looking like you're going out on a Saturday night." In addition, Shescape will not admit anyone to its events who is "intoxicated, on drugs, or anyone who has been a problem at other events." In regards to the incident with Nancy K., Rimn stated, "Our security person did everything he was supposed to do."

The three Black women have claimed racial discrimination in their complaint with the CHR. The white women have cited an infringement on their civil rights since the alleged actions of Shescape deprived them of their friends' company.

A fact-finding conference was held at the CHR on January 23, 1987, and a decision is pending. The six women are seeking a public apology in various community newsletters and publications, a publicly stated and posted non-discriminatory door policy, and monetary compensation. The CHR limits monetary awards to \$10,000 per complaint.

A Black woman named Cheryl

and her Chinese friend Pat also report experiencing differential treatment at a Shescape event last October. They report the man at the door physically blocked Cheryl from entering and asked her to produce a photo I.D. She presented a chauffeur's license which he allegedly refused to examine. Meanwhile, he let several women pass by without I.D. checks, and stopped another Black woman. When other women prodded him to look at Cheryl's I.D., he told her it was unacceptable. When she asked why other women were being let in without being carded, he said, "I know them." When Pat, the Chinese woman, arrived, she was allowed admission.

Pat and Cheryl left, and went to the Duchess, a lesbian club in Greenwich Village. There they met many women of color who described similar experiences with Shescape that evening. Cheryl called Shescape the next day to find out why she was denied admission. After being given "the runaround" about I.D.s and the dress code, she was told it was a "private party." When she asked

why her friend Pat was admitted even though she wasn't "invited," she got no explanation. Cheryl plans to file a complaint with the CHR.

Some women who say they have been discriminated against see a pattern based on what Nancy K. called "degrees of color." Many dark-skinned women with suitable I.D.s and "dressed to the nines" report being turned away while their light-skinned Black or Latina friends are admitted.

Members of COOL are planning pickets at future Shescape events and encourage other lesbians who have been denied entrance in the past to come forward. Women who are fearful of coming out can file complaints with the CHR by adding themselves to a previous complaint or by using an assumed name.

When Rimn was asked how she intends to respond to the lesbians taking action against her company, she said Shescape can stand on its record. "Let them knock themselves out," said Rimn.

—filed from Boston

Suit charged sex, race, lesbian bias

Black Lesbian Settles w/ABC

By Jennie McKnight

WASHINGTON, DC — A Black lesbian who filed a discrimination suit against the American Broadcasting Companies (ABC) has settled with the network out of court.

Linda Huber, one of Dorothy Green's lawyers, said she was pleased with the settlement and thought Green was also. She could not give any details about the settlement in accordance with the agreement.

Green's original \$20 million suit, filed May 29, 1986, claimed that ABC had discriminated against her on the basis of her sex and race. (See GCN, Vol. 13, No. 47) The suit was later amended to include charges of discrimination on the basis of sexual preference.

The settlement came weeks

after a federal court judge ruled against ABC's motion to deny Green a jury trial and consideration for punitive damages.

Green, who served as a technical manager in the network's Washington bureau, charged in her suit that she was subject to "repeated acts of insubordination by white male engineers and technicians, with the effect of the erosion and undermining of [her] ability to carry out her duties as supervisor." In a phone interview last June, Green told GCN, "There was an effort to harass me to a point where it jeopardized my health."

ABC fired Green in May of 1986, in what she considered to be retaliation for her suit.

Community Voices

drop him a line

Dear *GCN*:

I would like to tell you about a person I know. There was this young guy who I worked with, 22 yrs. old and doing quite a bit of time. He was gay and very effeminate. We were just friends. We had nothing physical going as we live on separate yards and I'm not inclined to become involved in a prison relationship. He was a very scared individual and to cover up his fright he would tell outlandish tales to make himself appear "better" or "bigger" in front of the other convicts.

I saw through this and convinced him to just be himself with me and I would like him and respect him more. Once this condition was established I became fond of him in a friendship type of way.

One day, a couple of weeks ago he was called out of work to go to the hospital. He didn't come back that day and it wasn't until the next day that I learned that he had been tested positive for AIDS.

Now, can you imagine an already scared and lonely young man being told he has AIDS here in prison! I can't even begin to imagine the thoughts going through his mind. I'm kind of a sensitive type and I know it's impossible to take everyone's problems on my shoulders, but this whole incident just blew me away. I'm sure we've all heard of the dungeon they lock these PWAs into in Vacaville where it's next to impossible to get any attention because everyone is afraid to get close to them (free people AND inmates).

I would like to ask a favor. Will someone out there drop him a line to let him know that we, the gays of America, understand and care? His address is: Gary Dean Cobb, C-69706, PO Box 2000, Vacaville, CA 95696.

Thank you!
Jeffrey L. Say
D-12579 (4275X)
PO Box 8101
San Luis Obispo, CA 93409

australian gay & lesbian radio

Dear *GCN*:

We're a new lesbian and gay radio program, **GIRLS GO GA-GA/ The ROCK HUDSON SHOW**, on radio station **RADIO SKID ROW** here in inner-city Sydney, Australia.

We're trying to make contact with lesbians and gay men involved in either mainstream alternative radio or specifically lesbian and/or gay radio programs (or women's radio programs).

We'd very much like to set up exchanges of interesting programs, ones with international relevance, between our two countries. Also exchanges of written news and anything else we can think of!

Our show goes out on Saturday evenings, 7 thru 10, and we cover news, politics, debates, culture, sex, and just plain fun. We differ in our programming from the other Sydeny lesbian & gay radio program, 'Gaywaves,' mainly due to our time slot (latenight Thursdays) but also in format. We play mostly dance music, and we're more 'upbeat/tempo'!

Hoping to hear from people soon. We can be contacted at 28 O'Connell St., Newtown, NSW 2042, Australia.

Sincerely,
Paul Canning
Newtown, Australia

P.S. We love your paper!

thank you gay press!

Dear *GCN*:

Thank you gay press for being. Thank you advertisers for keeping it inexpensive. Recent new year coverage of where we've been, are now, and what's ahead has challenged me.

In 1987, I, for one resolve to get the anger out to be consistent to go where most needed to *tell* what I know and feel to realize I've only begun to listen

GOOD LUCK!
Steve Wynn
San Francisco, CA

come inside and speak to us!

Dear *GCN*:

I'm writing this because I want you to hear a voice of a husband that is married to a gay. Now me and my wife are both in Auburn prison, but at times when I want to hold her I can't because the administration is very hard on bisexual and gay men as husband and wife. Now just recently me and my wife got back together from them separating us and our love for one another has grown deeper and stronger, but there are other inmates that try to get in the way of us and our love. Yes, in prison life is tough, but when you have a wife like mine nothing else matters.

Plus it is time that all bisexuals and gays that are in prison become unified and stop letting the administration and other inmates run over them or us. I'm saying this because since we have been back together she has got me to quit fighting with myself and to realize that I am a bisexual man and she loves me.

Now since I've been down all I ever hear from the guards is 'homo' this and 'homo' that and even inmates and prison personnel have gone so far as to make signs stating 'Stop AIDS' and above this writing is a gay bending over and a man fucking him.

Now what I would like to know is this. Is there anybody out there that could help us start a committee for the bisexual and homosexual men and women in prison? So that the prison personnel could see that we are human beings as well. You see, in the prison system they have all types of programs, but they don't have one for the bisexuals and gays. If only I could get in touch with an organization out here that would come into the prisons and speak to the gays so we could become more unified and stop running away from the problem, we would be better off.

I would like to dedicate this to all the gays and bisexuals in and out of prison, and a Special dedication to my wife Sasha-Love, aka Willie Rice.

Thank you,
LeRoy Burroughs Jr.
84C-246
135 State St., Box 618
Auburn, NY 13024

GCN prints all letters to the editor except personal attacks. Carbon copies of letters sent elsewhere are only printed on a space-available basis. Letters should be TYPED and DOUBLESAPCED and limited to five typed pages. Send to Community Voices, GCN, 167 Tremont St., Boston, MA 02111.

gcn denied to ark. prisoners:legal help needed!

Dear *GCN*:

I am a 42 year old lesbian. I am doing a life without sentence. I have enjoyed your newspaper tremendously. It has brought me a lot of happiness and comfort. It has also brightened my life. I have made some goals for myself to write a little article for your paper on drugs and alcohol abuse. I am in substance abuse treatment program in here and I would like to share with you and your paper something that will help people keep out of prison. I believe in going the extra mile to help someone when I can..

After reading your paper it has changed my life tremendously and as appreciation I would like to do this. But today 1/23/87 I have been told that I cannot have my paper and it is like part of my life has been cut off from me. I still will continue to write my little article for you. I may not be able to read them but I will help out.

I need someone out there that cares about people like me to help me in this situation. I am crying out to the public so JoAnn Benoit 2590 can keep her paper. I don't know what they will do to me after you print this article. I have some fear around it. Please print it. Your paper has helped me come out of the closet and not be ashamed of what I am. I have 4 children, including a 15 year old that is almost grown and they still love me as their mother after coming out of the closet.

I feel like I want the world to know that I feel like they are trying to take part of my life away from me and I am really hurt because my GCN is being taken away when it has brought me so much happiness.

I want to thank you for publishing the other letters from me and my lover. I have received a lot of caring and loving letters since you ran it. For me this is really a shame that I will not be able to read them after this. Please help.

Sincerely,
JoAnn Benoit
2590
8000 W.7th Unit 7
Pine Bluff, AR 71603

arson questions unanswered

Dear *GCN*:

I'd like to add a few belated comments to Charley Shively's news commentary on the suicide of ex-Vice Squad cop Walter B. Tower, "Toilet Cop Craps Out" (*GCN*, 11/16/86):

It is a bit of obvious hyperbole to call the Boston Police Department "the most corrupt in the world." True, after first coming here from Vermont, I did begin to wonder if corruption had been invented in Massachusetts. Moving later to San Francisco and then to Berkeley, where politics seemed almost clean by comparison, tended to reinforce prejudice. Then I lived for a time in Mexico City, where one *expects* to have to pay off the police at some time or another — be it for a parking ticket or for having illegal drugs crudely planted on your person by a plain clothes *agente* during a routine shakedown while you're walking down the street.

Charley refers to another ex-cop, Robert Groblewski, and the Donald Stackpole gang, which was indicted several years ago for over 250 counts of arson, including the fire that destroyed the *GCN/Fag Rag* offices and the Glad Day Bookshop in July, 1982. In his reporting on the indictments and on the subsequent trial (for several unrelated counts), *GCN's* Larry Goldsmith did not question the official implication that the newspaper fire had thereby been "solved." I wonder if it's all that simple?

I live in Fort Hill, where Stackpole, et al. set at least a dozen fires, including a rapid late night conflagration that destroyed several gay houses (miraculously, no one was killed). The gang's usual pattern was to torch buildings that were obviously vulnerable, a tactic that did not apply in the case of *GCN*: there the arsonist(s) had to enter a certain locked alley off Bromfield Street, climb a particular fire escape and cross a second floor roof to reach one of three specific windows, into which the incendiary device was thrown.

Did they really do it? If so, did someone assist them? Such questions remain unanswered. It is quite possible that the authorities may have added this fire (and how many others?) to the indictments simply to close the books on this investigation.

Boston Fire Department officials admitted they had known about the Stackpole gang long before the indictments came down, while countless homes burned. Charley mentions the march against the Vice Squad organized out of *GCN*, which had occurred several days before its fire, hinting that there may have been official collaboration in an act of revenge. Maybe we'll learn more in the ongoing federal probe into corruption in the Police Department, which has already unearthed a systematic pattern of shaking down gay bars in the city. But like Charley, I won't hold my breath.

Sincerely,
John Kyper
Roxbury, MA

GayCommunityNews

Cover design by Ina Cohen

Gay *Community News* is produced by a collective dedicated to providing coverage of events and news in the interest of gay and lesbian liberation. The collective consists of a paid staff of eleven, a general membership of volunteers, and a board of directors elected by the membership.

Opinions reflected in "editorials" represent the views of the paid staff collective. Signed letters and columns represent the views and opinions of the authors only. We encourage all readers to send us comments, criticism, and information, and to volunteer and become members.

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*indicates member of paid staff collective

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GCN JOB OPENINGS

GCN is seeking a CIRCULATION MANAGER/STAFF WRITER and an ART DIRECTOR, beginning 1/87-3/87.

CIRCULATION MANAGER/STAFF WRITER

Research and write news stories of interest to national readership. Coordinate weekly mailing of paper by volunteers, process subs and renewals. Requires writing skills and ability to work with deadlines, interpersonal, organizational and record-keeping skill. Knowledge of data entry and/or computers helpful.

ART DIRECTOR

Establish overall design of the paper, and oversee the layout and proofreading functions on production night. Design (or assign to volunteer artists) front cover, centerspread artwork/layout, and book supplement graphics, as well as promotional brochures, leaflets, etc. Requires strong graphic design/art skills. Familiarity with type specifications, knowledge of printing techniques and previous related experience preferred.

Positions require familiarity with gay and lesbian community; commitment to gay and lesbian liberation, feminism, anti-racism, and collective decision-making; and an awareness of class issues.

All *GCN* staff members receive \$180/week plus 4 weeks paid vacation, complete health/life insurance and sick leave. *GCN* also offers staff members a flexible, non-hierarchical work setting, with room for independence and innovation.

Send resumes to *GCN* Job Search, 167 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02111.

Lesbians and gay men of color are particularly encouraged to apply.

Application deadline for both jobs is February 15.

Speaking Out

Creating Myself from Scratch: Living as a Black Gay Man in the 1980s

By Joseph Beam

Each morning as I wipe the sleep from my eyes, don the costume that alleges my safety, and propel myself onto the stoop, I know with the surety of the laws of gravity that my footsteps fall in a world not created in my image. It is not in the newspapers, in store windows, nor is it on the television screen. Too often, it is not in the eyes of my sisters who fear my crack*, nor is it in the countenance of my brothers who fear the face that mirrors our anger. At day's end, having done their bidding, I rush home to do my own: creating myself from scratch as a Black gay man living in the late 1980s.

My desk and typing table anchor the northeast corner of my one-room apartment. There are days that I cling to both objects as if for sanity. On the walls surrounding me are pictures of powerful people, mentors if you will. Among them are: Audre Lorde, James Baldwin, Judy Grahn, Tommi Avicoli, Charles Fuller, Toni Morrison, and Barbara Smith. These writers, of local and international fame, are connected by their desire to create images by which they could survive as gays and lesbians, as Blacks, and as poor people. Their presence in my writing space bespeaks what another writer, Samuel Delany, calls the possibility of possibilities.

But it has not always been this way. I have not always known of the possibilities. In the winter of '79, in grad school, in the hinterlands of Iowa, I thought I was the first Black gay man to have ever lived. I knew not how to live my life as a man who desired emotional, physical, and spiritual fulfillment from other men. I lived a guarded existence: I watched how I crossed my legs, held my cigarettes, the brightness of the colors I wore. I was sure that some effeminate action would alert the world to my homosexuality. I spent so much energy in self-observation that little was left for classwork and still less to challenge the institutionalized racism I found there. I needed heroes, men and women I could emulate. I left without a degree, the closet door tightly shut. Several years passed before I realized that my burden of shame could be a source of strength. It was imperative for my survival that I did not attend to or believe the images that were presented of Black people or gay people. Perhaps that was the beginning of my passage from passivism to activism, that I needed to create my reality, that I needed to create images by which I, and other Black gay men to follow, could live this life.

The gay life is about affectation, but style is not imagemaking. Style, at best, is an attitude, a reaction to oppression, a way of being perceived as less oppressed, a way of

feeling attractive when we are deemed unattractive. The most beleaguered groups — women, people of color, gays and the poor — attend most intently to style and fashion. For a people who fashioned beautiful gowns and topcoats from gunnysack, it's nothing, nothing at all, that we can work some leather, fur, or gold. The lives we lead are richer than Gucci or Waterford; our bodies more fit that Fila or Addidas; our survival more real than Coca-Cola. Is it important who had tailored Malcolm's suit when he was killed? It almost goes without saying the positive work that's being done by Black gay men, closeted Black gay men, in our communities, our churches, arts and entertainment, and literature. But there is no pride in passing, no afterimage, nothing heroic about invisibility.

As African-Americans, we do not bequeath dazzling financial portfolios. We pass from generation to generation our tenacity. So I ask you: What is it that we are passing along to our cousin from North Carolina, the boy down the block, our nephew who is a year old, or our sons who may follow us in this life? What is it that we leave them beyond this shadowplay: the search for a candle-lit romance in a poorly-lit bar, the rhythm and the beat, the furtive sex in the backstreet? What is it that we pass along to them or must they too start from scratch?

*Before the popularization of the term "crack" as a drug, its common usage in the Black community referred to men publicly cruising and approaching women.

Joseph Beam is the editor of *In the Life: A Black Gay Anthology* (Alyson Publications, Inc., 1986) and the editor of *Black/Out*, the magazine of the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays. He lives in Philly where he dances for dollars as a waitron.

"Speaking Out" is part of our continuing effort to provide a true forum of opinion for the community. We encourage you to send your ideas, feelings, and comments to us and we encourage you to respond to any ideas expressed in this space. Submissions to "Speaking Out" should be TYPED and DOUBLE SPACED, and, if possible, held to under 5 pages in length. The GCN staff collective reserves the right to limit length and number of signatures in "Speaking Out." The opinions expressed in "Speaking Out" do not necessarily reflect the views of the newspaper, the staff, or the advertisers. Write c/o Speaking Out, GCN, 167 Tremont St., 5th Fl., Boston, MA 02111.

Black History Month

February is Black History Month and GCN plans to devote much of the month to articles by and about Black gay men and lesbians. If you are interested in writing for us, or have suggestions about writers or stories, please call (617) 426-4469 a. s. a. p. For Speaking Out submissions, contact Laurie Sherman; for news stories/analyses, call Stephanie Poggi; and for features stories, contact Loie Hayes. Graphics or photos, contact Ina Cohen. We look forward to hearing from you.

Community Voices

STILL LOOKING!

GCN has been formally evicted but we're fighting (stalling) it in court, while we look for leads on new space. We need about 1800-2000 sq.ft. reasonably near the T at about \$1000/month. Please call us at 426-4469 if you can help. Thanks!

foster care: case by case basis

GCN received a copy of this letter to Dick Jobin at the Executive Office of Human Services.

Dear Members of the Special Commission on Foster Care:

I am a clinical psychologist and an attorney who has been actively involved in working with and representing children and their families in cases involving child abuse and neglect for more than twelve years. I met with members of your subcommittee on legal and policy issues at the request of Jacquelynne Bowman, Esq., Chair.

In reviewing your proposed recommendations I was impressed with most aspects of your work, as your recommendations seemed to come from the problems and needs inherent in foster care rather than from political considerations. I was glad to see that with respect to the issue of gay foster parenting your commission was willing to deviate from the clearly political stance taken by the Governor and his Executive Secretary. It is within this context that I make the following comments with respect to your draft Recommendation #5: Foster Care Placement Policy.

The language proposed continues to raise serious questions regarding privacy and potential discrimination against certain classes of foster parents or prospective foster parents. The language states certain factors to be considered but neglects many parallel factors such as race, religion, and language spoken in the home. At the same time, gender and sexual preference as well as marital status are included.

Sexual preference or orientation has consistently been shown to be unrelated to parenting ability. Children raised in gay/lesbian households do as well as do children raised in heterosexual households. Therefore sexual preference or orientation is a factor to be considered only to the extent that it provides information about the lifestyle, support networks, relationships among

family members, and culture of a foster parent or family. Given that there is no clinical basis for excluding gay/lesbian persons as foster parents the Commission should explicitly state that sexual preference or orientation shall not be a bar to becoming a foster parent. Furthermore, sexual preference should not be asked of foster parent applicants. What should be ascertained is the relevant information regarding the composition of the family, the lifestyle, support networks, and capabilities of the applicant.

In your Recommendation #5 you state that there should be "...a special effort directed at developing foster homes that reflect the racial, cultural and ethnic diversity of the children needing foster care placement." I agree wholeheartedly with this latter statement. Certainly race, ethnicity, or religion can be as, or more, significant a factor to be considered in matching the needs of a particular foster child with a foster family than are marital status or sexual preference.

I recommend the following substitution of new language for your first paragraph in Recommendation #5:

"In placing foster children, the Commonwealth must consider both the needs and characteristics of the child and the abilities and characteristics of the foster parent or family. Factors such as the age, gender, religion, family composition, race, ethnicity, education, location, socio-economic status, language(s) spoken, employment status, special skills and abilities, relationships among family members, lifestyle, and available support networks shall be considered in identifying the most appropriate foster placement for a particular child. None of these factors nor marital status or sexual preference shall be an overriding determinant in a person's eligibility to become a foster parent, but they may be very important in the placement of a particular child in a particular foster home. Again, the ultimate standard in each case must be: can this foster home provide a temporary, stable, nurturing environment for this child? This decision can only be made on a case by case basis."

I would support the second and third paragraphs of this Recommendation in their current form.

I trust that you will carefully consider these comments and suggestions. If I can be of assistance or if you would care to discuss these matters further I would be happy to be involved.

Sincerely,
Nancy A. Coleman, J.D., Ph.D.
Brookline, MA

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Native Son Movie Only a Sketch of the Novel

Native Son. Directed by Jerrold Freedman, Produced by Diane Silver. With Victor Love, Geraldine Page, Oprah Winfrey, Elizabeth McGovern and Matt Dillon. Running time 112 minutes. At USA Copley, Boston.

By Kate Rushin

Jerrold Freedman's film *Native Son* has very little to do with the powerful and disturbing novel by the same name that Richard Wright published in 1940. Wright's novel is a horrifying and controversial indictment of the racism and violence in North American culture and its consequences on individuals both Black and white. It is a novel that influenced a genera-

tion of writers in the United States. While watching the movie, I had the very odd and unsatisfying sensation that the characters from Wright's novel were appropriated merely to make cameo appearances in Silver's movie.

Bigger Thomas, a poor, 19-year-old Black man caught in the despair, deprivation, frustration and violence of Depression-era, South Side Chicago, kills the 19-year-old daughter of his wealthy, white liberal employer and is sentenced to death for murder and rape. (Bigger also kills his girlfriend, a Black woman named Bessie, but this murder is left out of the movie.)

The heart of the novel is Bigger's transformation after the murders. The effectiveness of the story comes from the fact that we are privy to Bigger's point of view. We learn from *Bigger* how he sees his life and how he comes to understand himself and his actions and to accept responsibility for

them. He is eventually able to think and speak for himself.

In the movie, Bigger remains inarticulate. A few sentences and a little body language are substituted for his self-expression and self-definition. We get as much understanding of this Black man as we'd get from reading about the murders in a typical newspaper story.

But Wright did not create this character to simply report his actions. Wright was presenting his interpretation of American society and the kinds of people created by it. Freedman presents the plot of the novel without seeming to understand or respect Wright's purpose.

Not even the talents of the charismatic Victor Love (as Bigger), Academy Award-winning Geraldine Page or the well-known and popular Matt Dillon, Oprah Winfrey and Elizabeth McGovern are enough to rescue this film from its flat, cardboard quality. It is dif-

ficult to untangle the limitations of the directing and script-writing from those of the novel, but one thing is obvious: if you are in-

terested in the ideas and vision that Richard Wright put forth in *Native Son*, you'll have to read his book.



Victor Love (left) plays an angry Bigger Thomas in the movie *Native Son*, based on the novel by Richard Wright.

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Gay and a graduate of West Point

Face It: This Gay Man is a Soldier

By Annie Corbally

Raymond Foley's (his name has been changed to protect his identity), homosexuality hit him head on when he was a freshman at West Point. His class, consisting of 1,000 cadets included only 150 women. "I couldn't avoid it," he says, "I mean if you're gay, . . . you have to accept something like being gay, because if you don't, you're gonna throw yourself out of a window somewhere." Then, more seriously, he adds, "this feeling slowly built till one day I just realized: face it, you're gay."

Before entering the Academy, Foley remembers two clues to his sexual preference. First, when he was eight years old, he felt there was something different about him. Later, in high school, he had a "girlfriend," but they were really best friends, more like drinking buddies. Foley recalls when she went away during junior year, "I had all that time to think." But when she came back, "I didn't tell her I was gay, I said 'I think I'm gay.'"

"It's almost like acting. I've been playing a part for four years."

So how did he *think* he'd survive in an army where new recruits are asked to sign the following statement: "Have you or have you not had any homosexual experiences?"

"I rationalized," he says, because

he was sexually inexperienced, "you gotta do what you gotta do."

Since Foley's father was unemployed, that required finding a college that was cheap or free. Foley's high school teacher, a retired military officer, saw something in the then skinny, whimpy kid and suggested West Point. Perfect. The Academy would pay Foley to learn.

It also taught Foley to know himself.

"Honesty was always important to me," he begins, but his voice rises as he reflects, "and there I was wanting to be honest, [with the army], but I couldn't be or else I'd get thrown out. So what's more important?"

Cover me: to Foley, this common military term meant me, myself and I when his fear of being dishonorably discharged almost came true. Someone at the Academy reported suspicions of Foley's homosexuality to a company commander. Most of the cadets who Foley had trusted with

his secret, by accident or on purpose, shrugged their shoulders and said, "Oh." Foley admits, "it would have been better not to tell anyone, but with the intense pressure at West Point, I had to

tell someone."

That pressure demands that each cadet rise at 6:30, attend classes at 7:30, participate in parade practice and formations, as well as study, at scheduled times each day. By revealing his homosexuality to a few peers, he

was able to relieve some tension.

But he also agrees that he was looking for their approval. "Unfortunately," he continues, "someone felt it was their duty to turn me in." The company commander referred Foley to a counselor, who saw Foley fit to remain a cadet.

"Mainly because of the way I look and the way I act in uniform is what got me through that," he sighs, showing the relieved tension on his face, as his just-wrinkled forehead smoothes itself out.

According to Foley, who looks

Continued on page 10



Jeff Pike

V'ball Tourney

There will be lots of gut-wrenching action at the third annual Gay Community Volleyball Tournament sponsored by the Pleiades volleyball team. The photo at left, shot during a practice clinic on January 25, catches in motion members of two of the 12 registers teams.

Pleiades team member Jeff Pike notes with excitement that this will be the first year with as many women's teams as men's. Competition is divided by gender.

Spectators are encouraged to attend the tournament, Sunday, February 8, at the Martin Luther King School in Cambridgeport. Games begin at noon; finals start at 7 p.m. For more information, call 268-6313.

—Loie Hayes

business guide

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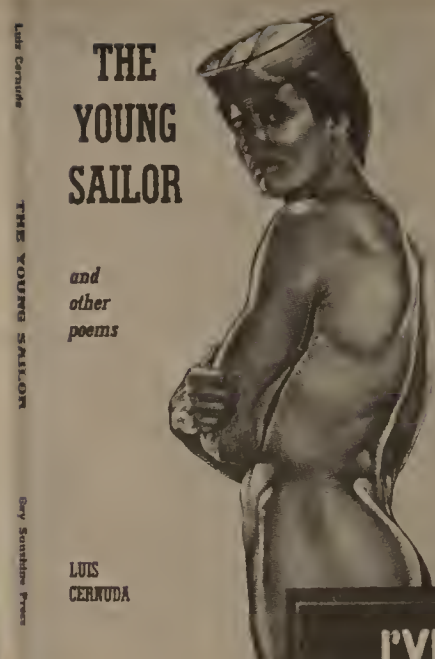
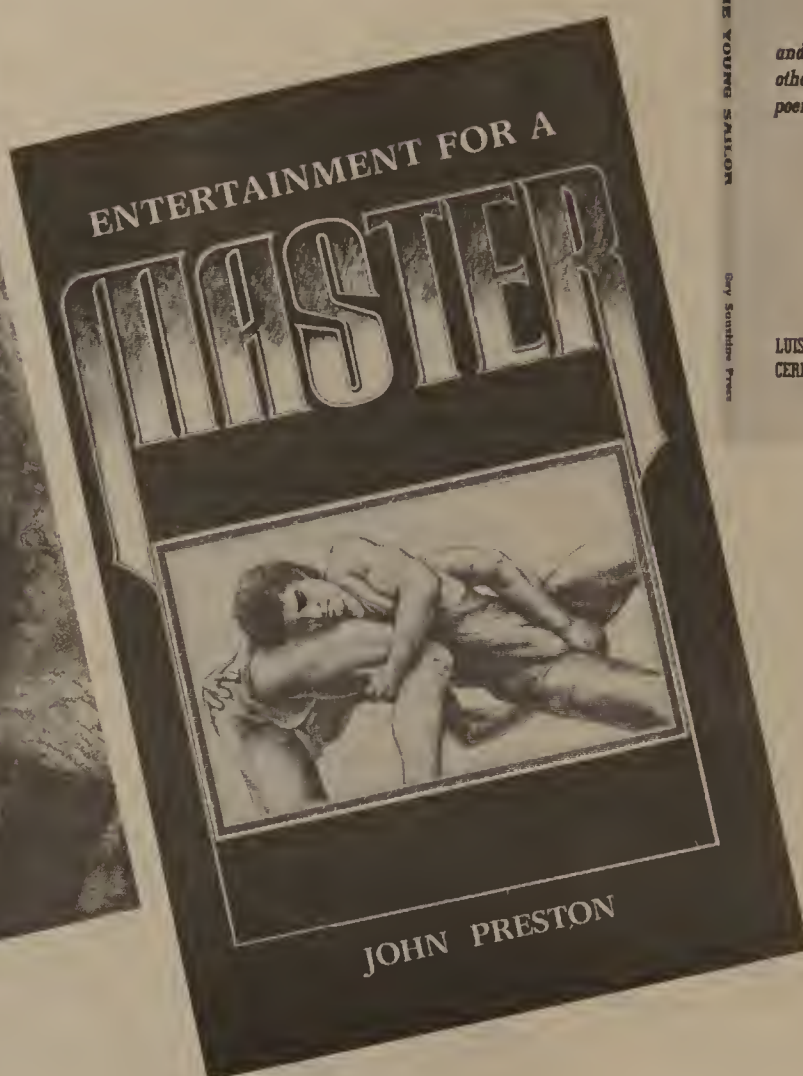
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Zeitgeist or Poltergeist?

Why Gay Books Are So Bad



By T. R. Witomski

I've just read a batch of new gay books, and they're all awful. But there's no need to deconstruct these books to show why each one fails. They fail generically, as one, and they fail because of the way the publishing system for gay material is set up. Literary talent has little to do with what's published; the philosophy of the book business makes it so that dreck is about all they can publish and make a buck on.

In the last 30 years, gay literature has not managed to produce a single masterpiece. There isn't a single novel about the gay experience (except maybe Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man* and James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* and, stretching things a bit, Rita Mae Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle* and Claire Morgan's *The Price of Salt*) that you'd want to share with someone outside of gay culture. There's no *Roots*, no gay *Portnoy's Complaint*, no gay *Fear of Flying* — three books that despite their flaws generated tremendous excitement; there's not even primo gay trash on the order of *Valley of the Dolls*, *I'll Take Manhattan* or *Evergreen*. While most gay books are crap, they lack the verve, the looniness, the style of the great trash masters.

The gay books I do admire are so specialized that they should carry warnings to heterosexuals: "Straights are advised that this book contains material which may not be suitable for them; gay guidance suggested." As worthwhile as *The Confessions of Danny Slocum*, the Boyd McDonald anthologies, *Restless Rednecks: Gay Tales of a Changing South*, *I Once had a Master and Other Tales of Erotic Love*, and the Phil Andros books are, they require almost as much pre-knowledge as Schoenberg's *Erwartung*. Gay writers complain because they aren't reaching wide audiences, but when you read what they're writing, you understand why: Just dip into *Men on Men: Best New Gay Fiction* — the majority of the selections appear to be written in a language that's almost English.

As a cultist I have a certain fondness for insular gay books, but it's disconcerting to see so many writers ignoring the bigger picture. Will there ever be a book that remains faithful to the gay experience but speaks to everyone, gay and straight alike, a gay book as passionate and popular as *Song of Solomon* or *The Chosen*? While Toni Morrison and Chaim Potok took us deeply into the lives of poor Blacks and Hasidic Jews respectively, you didn't have to be of the group each was writing about to be thrilled by these books.

The Smut and the Shame

Gay vernacular writing — not only pornography, but other genre work (mysteries, policers, the Alex Kane series) — touches people in ways that non-genre gay books don't, possibly because their writers make up in sheer skill what they may lack in literary talent. Vernacular writing constitutes the bulk of published gay material: writers are drawn to it because it's easier to get that material into print. The disproportionate amount of pornography in relation to the total volume of gay material, which has no correlation in any other minority literature, isn't entirely a matter of supply and demand. That smut sells well doesn't necessarily prove that gays are porn mavens; it does show that gays will buy the stuff they're saturated with. It's relatively easy to get a copy of *Firsthand* or *Mandate* magazines, much easier than locating a copy of a gay book.

Genre writing enables writers to hone their craft. In fact, when gay writers start thinking of themselves as better than their material, when their style becomes their substance, and their adjectives their plots, they may get mainstream treatment, but they often lose their audience. (As far as reaching the most people, a gay writer can't do better than writing for the gay stroke mags.) Many gay books fail because their authors become rarefied; they stop writing for the boys in the bars and they start writing for — well, that's the problem: I'm not sure who most non-genre gay books are supposed to be for. A book like the unspeakable *I've a Feeling We're Not in Kansas Anymore* probably goes over well in Fire Island Pines, thereby reaching a full one-hundredth of one percent of the gay population. What are the rest of us supposed to read?

Is it too much to ask that a gay novel tell a good story? Is storytelling politically incorrect or something? What amazed me about Paul Reed's *Facing Up* and Charles Nelson's *The Boy Who Picked the Bullets Up* was not that their narratives were particularly compelling, but that they had narratives. The bulk of the "artier" gay material (Gluck's *Elements of a Coffee Service*, Picano's *Ambidextrous*, Ferro's *The Blue Star*, Cooper's *Safe*) may have some value as literary exercises, just as novels written without using the letter "e" would, but this curious attribute certainly doesn't make for a visceral response.

Why is gay literature in such a shameful state? Why are gay books a joke among minority literatures? Why can't you discuss gay lit in the same way as you can current Black and Jewish writing? Some clues may be found in looking at the mechanics of how and why gay books get published.

Most gay books, gay male and lesbian, fiction and non-fiction, from both mainstream and small presses, are so dreadful that when I see people buying them, I think that these books are not attracting an audience; they're inheriting one. Gay people just want to read books that touch on their experiences. They've been ripped off repeatedly, by both straight and gay publishers, yet they keep buying. Sales figures only tell that people are buying books, not that they're enjoying them. And most people don't realize how few copies of a gay book are sold: five thousand copies of a book from a major press isn't a bad sale and it's damn good by small press standards. Still, the publication of gay material is enjoying a relatively financially healthy period now (no one is making a lot of money, but enough people are making enough money to perpetuate the cycle), so there's no economic reason for publishers to want to produce better books.

Playing Safe

The mainstream plays safe. Major publishers think they are taking enough risk by simply publishing gay material. To want them to publish challenging, original gay books is asking them for the moon when they think they're already giving us the stars. Neither *Urban Aborigines* nor *Facing It* nor *In the Life*, which, despite their problems, are three of the more interesting gay books I've read could have been published by mainstream publishers; these books took risks that major publishers wouldn't have wanted to share. It's remarkable they were published at all, but no system is foolproof.

Mainstream publishers are emulated by the small

presses. Publishers generally have no real love of books, but their business forces them to have contact with folks who do. Most chief honchos at publishing companies are very astute at business and so they go at books as they'd go at shirts or VCRs — "perfecting" them, honing them to fit some poorly-defined idea of what people want, and caring next to nothing about literary values. Publishers want books they know they can sell; their critics want books that are moving experiences.

Publishers of gay material usually have terrible taste. Most of them have never read for pure pleasure. Barbara Grier of Naiad Press is the exception which proves the rule: Grier is the only publisher I can think of who has done bibliographical research on gay material. Publishers don't generally have the background, the instincts, or the information of people who have lived books, and they have no shame about not knowing anything about literature. From their point of view, such knowledge is not essential to their work: you don't need a familiarity with Gertrude Stein, Jean Genet, and Yukio Mishima to be able to understand an annual report.

The literary incompetence of publishers and more and more editors doesn't prevent them touting themselves as creative geniuses, and they'll get very huffy if they're told that their decisions are not based in understanding literary talent, but in merely knowing how the publishing game is played. If a mainstream house wants one gay novel for its fall list because it had one such book last season that played in Peoria, there will be one such book. If it isn't a commercial failure, the editor who acquired it prides himself for knowing the market and the following season he can do another dull gay book. If a small gay press considers a hundred projects, publishes ten, and has one decent seller, the publisher will be considered a hero and will be giving interviews about the golden age of gay literature. The quality of what he publishes is of no concern to him: what's good is what sells.

Book is a Book is a Book

What sells should be what's good, but presently there's no way to test this odd, intriguing little theory. Publishers moan about having to reject good material because they say they are overwhelmed with submissions, and writers, who believe an amazing amount of the bullshit publishers dish out, say there's a need for more publishers of gay material. But new publishers would probably opt for the same sort of second-rate material that everyone's turning out. The road to literary hell is paved with the good intentions of publishers who start out saying "I'm gonna do it right; I'm not gonna screw up like Alyson or Gay Sunshine." Several projects later, these publishers are turning down the same "good material" that Alyson and Gay Sunshine did and building up the same type list they first wanted to avoid. "Don't you think I'd like to publish good books?" they ask and answer, "You know I would, but I simply cannot sell them to my readers."

That's not exactly true. The difficulties for a new publishing company aren't dependent on what kind of material it's putting out. But the publishers soon tire of difficult births and are prone to take the path of least resistance. Why bother searching out or developing top-notch material if an also-ran manuscript will sell just as



but the whole business gets very incestuous; the same names keep popping up all over the place so you could think of gay publishing as a never-ending game of "Round Up the Usual Suspects") — X is an editor at a major house who might be good for a big reprint sale some day, X's book is in a boring, safe formula, X is fucking someone — well — at the publishing house, X's book is rank porn, which is always easy to break even on. You have to be incredibly stupid to go broke publishing pornography.

Maxims of Misinformation

Publishing houses have their sacred groups of misconceptions, and they simply ignore any opinions contrary to the official line of thought. "Collections don't sell" is one such holy maxim (except, of course, when, like the Boyd McDonald sex writing anthologies, they do). Another is: "People don't want to read about ." Fill in the blank: SM, politics, New York, writers, Vietnam, lesbian nuns — oops, scratch the last one. But often the best books are about subjects people don't want to read about; good writing will always draw people to its subject. Essentially, all bits of falsely-reasoned publishing scripture boil down to "We don't know how to sell it and we're not gonna try" or — as this law is more commonly expressed — "There's no market for it." That's the final word, and there's no sense arguing that a good book could create its own market.

Since all publishers play by the same rules, writers easily become demoralized. Writers are seen by editors and publishers as their enemies. The less secure the editor or publisher is, the more frequently he says no. The publishing business treats all but a very few top writers, those who have consistently produced big money-makers, with indifference or contempt. Publishers and editors would probably like to find a way to produce books without using writers. Maxwell Perkins is dead, and we will never see his kind again.

More Problems

If a writer does get a contract for a gay book, his problems are just beginning. There will likely be endless fights about revisions. The publisher may decide, for example, that sex is out or that sex is in and demand that all books conform to this dictum. Publishers aren't going to give the book much promotion, so when the book doesn't do spectacularly well, they'll be able to question the validity of the gay book market. And publishers can also blame the critics, particularly at the *New York Times*, for a gay book's disappointing sales. (Gay reviewers who don't praise everything queer that comes off the presses are considered "traitors," though a publisher's pet, like Ethan Mordden, will get to periodically attack other gay writers in the *Advocate*.) Of the several hundred books produced each year that have a strong appeal to the gay market, only a handful get reviewed by the *Times*. To get a *Times* review, a gay book generally must be by a well-known writer preferably not performing at his best, or be so ferociously learned, like John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, that the *Times* would lose intellectual credibility by not noticing it. (The *Times* did, however, get away with a brief snide review of Richard Plante's *The Pink Triangle*, surely the major gay book of 1986.) But the *Times*, with its long homophobic history, isn't the likeliest place to look for support for gay books anyway, so it's not strange not to see many gay books reviewed or advertised there. What is strange is not seeing more gay books advertised in the gay press. Ads in a typical issue of *The New York Native*, for example, would have us believing that Alyson Publications is the only company producing gay books.

The gay small presses seem determined to remain insignificant. Though they don't have the resources big time houses do, they often seem to be hiding behind the self-serving idea that they are doomed not to sell many copies of their books no matter what they do. There's no textural reason why Gay Sunshine's *Facing It* shouldn't have been a phenomenal best-seller (by small press standards, that's 25,000 copies; *Facing It* has sold about a tenth of that), but the book was almost cruelly mis-promoted, as if the publisher didn't have the confidence that any publisher should have in any book he produces. The small presses lack the determination to break out of their ghettos; they don't often use all the business opportunities open to them, and if they try to show savvy, they get jumped on by activists who think success means selling out. Barbara Grier was crucified for her promotion of *Lesbian Nuns*, but she was just doing what any publisher should do with good hot property.

The absence of political will on the part of gay small

presses might be understood if they resisted success out of a desire to devote themselves to books that were particularly demanding of readers and, as such, wouldn't be able to find a large audience. But almost all of what the gay small presses produce is simplistic material for very general gay audiences. Yet gay publishers promote these books as if they were selling the homosexual equivalent of *Finnegans Wake*; what they are selling is typically a fag/dyke Harlequin romance.

There's a thin line in the gay small presses that separates a failure from a success, often just a couple of hundred copies. You'd think small presses would be willing to take chances, but these houses are often just as stodgy as the most conservative mainstream publishers. Gay publishers don't bother developing good projects since the very worst that a bad project can do is "fail" — which will be offset by a bad project that "succeeds."

Wasted Time, Wasted Trees

What isn't generally understood is how much talent and hard work are wasted; if it were all channeled productively, something resembling a gay literature might result. As it is now, perfectly publishable manuscripts (which, while not all masterpieces, are at least no worse than most of what is published) can bounce around publishing houses for years until the writers no longer remember why they wrote the books in the first place and are too disgusted to continue peddling the scripts. There isn't a gay writer who doesn't have a personal collection of horror stories with publishers and editors cast as Dracula and his son, all variations on the theme of writers feeling victimized by the publishing system. They feel victimized because they don't understand how the system works. In essence: if an editor goes along with another tired book on an overdone idea and the book fails, it won't be his fault, but if he pushes a quirky, interesting new idea that fails, he's thought to have lost his touch. The key to getting published is giving publishers and editors what they want, but what they want isn't — can't be — good because they don't bring literary standards to their judgments.

Basically, a superlative gay manuscript is a manuscript that St. Martin's Press or NAL has accepted. A good gay manuscript is a manuscript that Alyson or Naiad has accepted. A bad gay manuscript is a manuscript that St. Martin's, NAL, Alyson, and Naiad have turned down. The decision making involved is highly capricious. (Who you know doesn't hurt.) In the universe of publishing realpolitik, it's not just that the decisions about what gets published might have been made by anyone, but that the books which result frequently read like they could have been written by anyone.

My Brother, My Lover is a particularly atrocious recent gay novel, a tragic accident that no one tried to prevent. Didn't anyone connected with this book realize what rotten stuff they were working on? Or is there a deep cynicism here, an attempt to show that gay people will read anything, that it doesn't matter what a publisher produces because the audience has no class, no discernment, no critical facilities?

Publishers don't see writers as individual. So even if a writer has a moderately successful gay book for a publisher, that's no guarantee that the publisher will be at all interested in what the writer does next. The publisher will most likely have a "first refusal" contract with the writer, but by the time the writer completes a second book, the publisher will have forgotten about the writer because in the publisher's mind the writer is interchangeable with any number of other gay writers. With such an attitude on the publishers' parts, it's no wonder that not only are so many gay books bad, but they're bad in the same way — unsure, hesitant, depersonalized, artless, mindless. After I've read a half-dozen or so bad gay books they tend to blend together in my mind; it's difficult to believe each was written by a different person.

When writers are perceived as being without personalities when publishers think, "If he won't do it my way, someone else will," publishing loses its soul. Publishing has always been a business first, but only fairly recently has publishing become a business like any other business. Gay writers, I think, almost all feel privileged to be able to write about the gay experience. (If they don't, there's always a publisher to tell them, "If it weren't for me, you'd have no hope of getting published at all.") Gay writers aren't fools, but they are certainly not writing principally for the money. If a writer realizes \$1,500 or \$2,000 from a gay small press book (and often not very much more than from a mainstream production), a book which may have taken him a year or more to write — almost no gay writer can afford to write full time — he's doing good. But he'll probably not be in a hurry to work on another book. The hassles aren't worth it.

Bad books drive out good. Gay books are so bad because the publishing system demands that many of them be reductions of the gay experience to the most common denominators. At one time, any book about homosexuality was revolutionary no matter what its literary merit. Today, for the most part, gay books are updates of *The Homosexual in America* and *The Well of Loneliness*. If something is worth doing, the publishing wisdom holds, it is worth doing over and over and over again until no one remembers why there was ever any interest in the subject in the first place. The real losers are the readers, caught between the rock of unadventurous publishers and the hard place of mediocre writers.

Story of O

If a writer, O, has an idea for a gay book, he'll either write it (which is sheer madness; the odds are overwhelmingly against the book being published no matter what its quality), or he starts talking with people at publishing houses (which can be equally mad).

Assuming O is lucky, he may actually succeed in getting past a publisher's flunkies and grab the attention of an editor who'll probably tell him, "It's an interesting idea, but we're currently working on a book like the one you're proposing." Of course, O's idea is seen as like a project the company is working on; if O's idea were too radical, he wouldn't even have gotten as far as hearing from an acquisitions editor. But most probably the book that O is proposing isn't really like the book the editor is telling him it's like. But one gay book is the same as another gay book to publishers, so if a house is committed to a new Andrew Holleran or a new Edmund White, that commitment effectively cancels out any other gay writer's chances. (Holleran's and White's diminishing capacities as writers does not affect their publishing ins: the writer the house knows is always better than the writer the house doesn't know.)

Most likely O is a terrible writer, but no one will tell him that and risk being thought crude. But if O has some talent that could be developed, he won't get any encouragement from editors or publishers. These people are too busy to devote time to writers. Ironically, a terrible writer who's tenacious may have a better chance at publication than a writer who has ability that needs nurturing. Bad writers don't need encouragement; they plow on relentlessly. But a potential good writer who needs (and would welcome) some editorial input (and won't get it) might not continue to write; when he sees the garbage that does get published, he may think "I can never do that" and give up entirely.

Should O go to a small gay publisher with an idea for a book, he'll probably be told, "Sure, send it to us when you're done." And when he finishes the book, he'll hear, "This doesn't do anything for me." This rules out O's book — and O. The publisher doesn't care if O has a writing talent worth developing because right now the publisher is, say, too wrapped up trying to sell X's book, which may be stinko (and everyone knows it), but . . . And here the possible permutations are endless (God alone knows all the kinds of deals that are struck to get gay books into print,

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Face It: This Gay Man is a Soldier

Continued from page 7

like he just walked off the set of *An Officer and a Gentleman*, "most people can't get it through their heads that gay people and straight people look the same." Especially in uniform. Foley says, "even the people that do know I'm gay can't quite figure it out.

fun anymore.' But that kept my mind occupied for three years."

Now, Foley's got a steady boyfriend that he met at an inter-collegiate function. Of this relationship, Foley says, "I had just given up the idea of ever finding anyone or of ever falling in love,"

going to be pretty."

Neither is the "unfun game" of leading a double life that must continue. "When I found out I was gay, I just told myself that I wouldn't do anything gay... HA, HA, HA," he strains. Then, sitting cross-legged on the couch

*"When I found out I was gay,
I just told myself I wouldn't do anything gay...
HA, HA, HA," he strains.*

They say I look too right in uniform. But I have to tell them 'No, really, it's true,' " he laughs.

Still, it's hard to believe that while on duty this polite, introverted young man likes to "scream, shout and yell." He claims, "I'm a loudmouth. I have to be. It's my job and so most people say, 'Hey, he's a soldier.' It's almost like acting. I've been playing a part for four years."

Once, he even played the part of Romeo on campus. "Well, I was sort of seeing this guy," he says, "but that got very messy." It took a year to establish the romantic interest between them. "We only saw each other during off-time," Foley continues, "but nothing ever happened on post. We talked and that's it. It turned out that he didn't know what he wanted out of any sort of relationship. I just got rid of him. I said 'the hell with this, this just isn't

and adds, "I was shocked and thrilled by it all."

Now that he has graduated from the United States Military Academy, Lieutenant Foley will leave the States to serve for five years at an American base abroad. Optimistically, he says, "it'll be good because Jim, (his lover's name also has been changed to protect his identity), will be able to establish himself and do what he wants and I'll be able to play G.I. Joe for a while." This casual attitude lends itself to a lower tone of voice, uncovering the expected loneliness. "Jim isn't crazy about me being a soldier because something might happen to me. I'll be keeping myself busy, though. I plan to be putting in 12- and 13-hour days, although it'll still be hard and I'll know Jim's not there. We both knew I had this assignment before we started going out, but it's still not

in his boyfriends apartment, he leans forward, rubs his forehead and says, "I don't know why I'm gay, nobody knows. There is really no explanation for it." Sadly, he adds, "for the entire four years at West Point, there was always this nagging voice inside of me saying 'You shouldn't be here.' "

Wrong. Like every other cadet, Foley completed the admittance process which requires each entrant to receive a nomination from their state congressional representative, fill out over a year's worth of forms and pass a rigorous physical examination. But, unlike the others, Lt. Foley had to pass further tests to retain his military status.

And, if he so desired, Foley could be dishonorably discharged tomorrow. A simple confession of his homosexuality would start an investigation by the Academy that would have him booted before we could say: Attention!

"But I'd feel really bad about doing that," Foley says, "because in good faith, me and the army made a deal: you give me an education and I'll give you five years in uniform." However, after he is honorably discharged, he would like to level with the army, "so I can live my life and they can live theirs," he says.

For now, he's got his degree and the advice of a Colonel to take overseas: to be a good officer, you have to make a distinction between your personal and professional life. Lt. Foley smiles; he's done that already. And adds, "I have the army officer face I give to the army and I have the life inside me. It'll be hard, but I owe them that."

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NBC Affiliate Produces Documentary on Gay Man with AIDS

TV AIDS Show Profits from Personal Focus

AIDS: The Paul Cronan Story. A video documentary produced by Barry Ahrendt for WBZ Eyewitness News. January 30. WBZ-TV, Channel 4, Boston. Running time: one hour.

By Loie Hayes

With Paul Cronan's words "I'm not ashamed anymore," WBZ News opens this in-depth portrait of an ordinary person coming to terms with the extraordinary affliction that is AIDS. The cameras follow Cronan from before his diagnosis, through 15 months of

The video's most serious failing comes unsurprisingly with one of the issues most feared by our culture: sex. WBZ makes an effort here, at one point announcing that Cronan has a new lover, and, at another, asking him about his other recent sexual contacts. Though Cronan is clear about practicing safe sex, he becomes defensive when saying he doesn't always tell his partners that he has AIDS.

This segment, and other references to Cronan's sexual relationships, are cursory and confus-

ing, as if WBZ wanted to be daring but couldn't quite do it. In keeping with the documentary's format of using the narrator to fill in information missing from the footage of Cronan, it is easy to imagine a simple allusion to the breadth of sexual expression people with AIDS have asserted for themselves. That narrator's calm voice is missing here. Panic about promiscuous gay men with AIDS is all too prevalent for a responsible news documentary not to address.

Escape from sexual guilt, and the assertion of a gay man's pride,

lie at the heart of Cronan's story. From his memories of sissy embarrassment in Catholic grade school, through his decision to fight AIDS-related job harassment and his anger at his doctors, we watch as the camera records the emotional turmoil of a man facing death.

WBZ has produced an unromanticized epic in this short tape. Cronan is quoted saying, "AIDS is the best thing that has happened to me," an incredibly sad comment that perhaps can only be fully appreciated by those who are living with an incurable disease.

When he speaks in the next sentence of how he might otherwise be "going to the grave hating myself," his audience is reminded once again of the homophobia inculcated in us all. The AIDS epidemic is nothing to be grateful for. Still, the fact that there are those among us, straight people included, who will gain strength from seeing *AIDS: The Paul Cronan Story*, remains something for which gay and lesbian liberation activists should give thanks — to WBZ, and to Cronan himself.

Escape from sexual guilt, and the assertion of a gay man's pride, lie at the heart of Cronan's story.

court battles with his employer, hospital emergencies, raised and dashed hopes, and, finally, to his determination to make the best of whatever time he has left. It is a portrait which will be welcomed by many gay people involved in the struggle to win, from the straight world, dignity for gay men with AIDS.

The personal focus of this project will go far toward winning the hearts of sympathetic straight viewers. Likewise, gay rights strategists who argue for putting forward our most "normal" representatives will value Cronan's stories of Irish Catholic childhood, his 12 years of stability at work, his being a home-owner, well-loved by gay and straight neighbors alike. Even as the video continues and we see the sharper edges of Cronan's personality brought out by anxiety concerning his disease, WBZ continues to show us how these shortcomings are familiar and forgivable.



Paul Cronan

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Bangor to Beijing: Tell Us About Your Life

GCN always welcomes articles from our readers. We depend on you for news leads, features suggestions and letters to the editor.

If you'd like to try your hand at features writing, there are a number of forms available. The story of how you came to call yourself gay, lesbian or bisexual is

always a good place to start.

Pick some event, or a period of your life, that will offer people a sense of the tensions and hopes you felt as you were coming out, either to yourself or to someone else. Whether you're just recently out, or met your first lover in 1926, GCN's readers want to

know what your experience was like.

We'd also like to hear about lesbian and gay life in more parts of the country. Is your local activist group involved in a boycott or an educational campaign? Can you find someone to give you a history of gay or lesbian meeting places in

your state? Is anyone performing street theater or reading "out" poetry in your area? What's unique about your city that folks in San Fran and Bean Town will be excited to learn about?

Writers from other countries are also encouraged to send in news and views: we know that gay

and lesbian people are doing alot around the globe that we in the U.S. never hear about.

Because so much of the U. S. media focuses on young, classically beautiful, white, wealthy people, we're especially anxious to print work by or about gay men and lesbians who aren't included in the above categories.

The bad news is that we can't pay for any articles, but the good news is that we will give you editorial suggestions that may help you improve your writing for future projects. We don't promise to print everything we receive, but we will let you know if we're not going to use your submission. If at all possible, please type your article, double-spaced. It's a good idea to make a photocopy before sending anything out. Include a day-time phone number, if possible, so we can reach you quickly in the face of a looming deadline. Photos are certainly welcome (we pay \$7 for each photo we print); black and white is preferable.

If you've always wanted to give writing a try, GCN's a great place to start. Our address is: 167 Tremont St., 5th floor, Boston, MA 02111. Letters to the editor and Speaking Out essays should be addressed to the Coordinating Editor; news and features pieces can be sent to those editors, respectively.

— Loie Hayes

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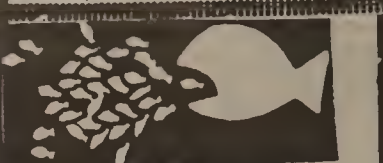
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nie WHITLOCK, 192-245, Box 511,
Columbus OH 43216.

Young & fresh Italian low keyed Scor-
pio with dark and lovely eyes, halry
where it counts; mysteriously
vulnerable, welcomes friends capable
of relating to high strung emotlons.
Bradley VELTRE, 153593, 18701 Old
Hwy 66, Pacific MO 63069.

I'm a bisexual but I haven't had too
many other guys, but I'd like to get
hopefully more involved and get to
know someone. Please send picture if
you can. Jim MAISON, 207154, Box
316, Ft. Madison IA 52627

Interests: reading, writing, hor-
ticulture, good food (cooking and
eating), jewelry, animals, running and
camping the mts. & ocean, 60s-70s
rock n roll, some country. Would like
to correspond with men into bondage.
Robert SCHUBART, 081456, PO Box
1500 (MB 711), Cross City FL 32628

Hoping to put together a parole (job &
housing) plan and get out of here this
summer. Haven't had a big love mus-
cle in many moons. Would like to get
out of this state. Please write. Kim
MARK, 206094, Box 316, Ft Madison,
IA 52627.



We are PUZZLED (& discouraged)

wondering where all the letters,
poems & drawings are for our
SPECIAL issue on LESBIANS
in prison???? (We know stamps
can be a problem...) We HOPED
to be FLOODED (smile) with
your feelings & thoughts (!)
PLEASE send something & help
us make this a GREAT special
issue. (THANKS!)



Gay & Lesbian Penpals

We are a "support" group for gays
and lesbians and have no limitations
on correspondence as long as you
can find a stamp to send a letter.
Prisoners are welcome to write. Gays,
bisexuals or lesbians, write to:
GLCSE, PO Box 38777, Hollywood CA
90038.

I LIKE QUEENS (and photography and
fashions and sex). And please write it
you can. (I hope you win your suit
against this state for not letting you
send GCN to us!) Quintin VAUGHN,
Box 1027, Marlon VA 24354.

Gay male, various interests, would
like to have penpals in or near the
South Shore (Mass.) area. I'm in touch
with an international gay prisoners'
rights group and would like a nearby
outside contact to help in com-
municating with them. Thank you,
Donald HUNTLEY, 30 Administration
Rd, Bridgewater MA 02324.

I'm a little man looking for an older
guy. I'm non-violent and don't do
drugs. I need someone to write to.
Please write. Ron DERESKEY,
39140, Box 900, Jefferson City MO
65102

I am IMMENSELY Interested in
establishing a MUTUALLY fulfilling
friendship with someone in the so-
called "free-world". I have a BA in
journalism and love all forms of danc-
ing, especially ballet. Am in here for
cashing, not forging, forged check.
Let's write. Gerald HERRING, Box
137, Tillery NC 27887.

Bliss! Awaiting an initiated devout
Hole for correspondence ifescene
equaling the Solar Dynasty Bliss.
Paul COPPOLA, 75A 1884, Box 149,
Attica NY 14011.

Openly BI black male presently con-
fined in the 'hole' (disciplinary hous-
ing) just saw my first copy of your
paper (someone else's). GREAT! Can
I receive it too? (They 'discourage'
sharing in here.) I'd like to be in your
penpal space if possible. I'm very
athletic, bright with a good sense of
humor and VERY SEXUAL. (YES, is
my favorite word.) Send photo if
possible. Daniel HEATH, P-5484, Box
99901, Pittsburgh PA 15233.

I'm a prisoner and would like to
receive some letters from anyone
open minded enough to write a con-
vict. Please print this in your
magazine. William MILLER, 45023,
Box 900, Jefferson City MO 65102

Enjoy art, movies, partys, skiing and
looking for that someone. Please cor-
respond! Jon ARCHER, 802034, Box
B, Anamosa IA 52205

Brown wavy hair, liberal, would like
to share letter with persons on the
outside. Sexual preferences no bar-
rier. Mike WILLIAMS, 907744, D39,
Box 578, Crestview FL 32536.



CALENDAR

**January 31
to
February 15**

31 saturday

Cambridge — Balkan Music Night concert & dance party. First Congregational Church, 11 Garden St. 8PM. \$5. Info: 395-0422.

february 1 sunday

Boston — "Sophie Makes Good" presented by the **New Ehrlich Theater**. 539 Tremont St., South End. 8PM. \$5. Info: Heather Glenn, 482-6316.

2 monday

Boston — GCN potluck and membership meeting. All welcome to review past issues and help plan for the future. 167 Tremont St. 6PM. Info: 426-4469.

Boston — Gay and Lesbian Issues of National Ass'n of Social Workers monthly meeting. Info: Sherry Zitter, 524-4780.

Cambridge — DOB support group for lesbian entrepreneurs. Old Cambridge Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. 8PM. Info: 661-3633.

Cambridge — "Musically Speaking," hosted by Melanie Berzon. 8-10PM. WMBR-FM, 88.1.

Boston — Gay/Lesbian Community Center incorporation party. 1270 Boylston Street. 7PM. Free.

3 tuesday

Cambridge — WITCH 1987 Feminist Lecture Series presents "Female Political Prisoners in the 1980s: A Critical Look at Therapy and Its Stranglehold on the Women's Liberation Movement" with speaker Bonnie Mann. Harvard Divinity School, Brown Room, 45 Francis St. 8PM. Info: 491-3549.

Cambridge — Rhonda Rivera, "An Overview of Recent Trends in Sexual Orientation Law including Family, Military and Immigration Issues." John Chipman Gray Room, Pound Hall 213, Harvard Law School, 1563 Mass. Ave. 7PM. Info: 661-8279.

Boston — LEGACY, drop-in for lesbian/gay elders & friends. GLCS, 6 Hamilton Pl. 11AM-5PM. Men's discussion group, 1PM. Info: Ann Maguire, 725-3485.

Cambridge — LEGACY, drop-in for lesbian/gay elders & friends. Camb. Committee of Elders, Pearl St., Central Sq. 6-8PM. Info: Ann Maguire, 725-3485.

Boston — Gay/Lesbian Community Center building search meeting. City Hall, Rm. 801. 7PM. All welcome. Info: 725-3485.

4 wednesday

Boston — Boston Ballet presents "The Young, the New, and the Legendary," including work by Mark Morris. Wang Center. 8PM. Through 2/8. \$10.50 and up. Info: 1-800-682-8080.

5 thursday

Boston — GCN's production night. All welcome. Proofreading: until 8PM. Paste-up: 8PM-on. 167 Tremont St., near Park & Boylston T-stops. GCN: 426-4469.

Boston — "The Group," social support group for lesbians & gays aged 22+. Hill House, 74 Joy St. 7:30PM. Info: Michael, 236-7887.

Boston — Dance Party with O-Positive to benefit AIDS research & the Eventworks festival. Longwood Aud., Mass. College of Art, 364 Brookline Ave. 10PM. \$5. Info: 731-2040.



Larry Kessler, 7 saturday

Allston — Double Edge Theater presents "Song of Absence in the Fall of the Ashen Reign." 5 St. Luke's Rd. 8PM. \$0-10. Through 2/14. Info: 254-4228.

6 friday

Boston — GCN's volunteer night: all welcome to help mail the paper to our subscribers. Refreshments, good times. Anytime after 6PM. 167 Tremont St., near Park & Boylston T-stops. GCN: 426-4469.

Boston — "Building a Feminist Movement: A Perspective from the Philippines," potluck and discussion. 636 Beacon St., 5th floor, Kenmore Sq. 7PM. Info: 262-1047.

Somerville — Urania: a lesbian and bisexual women's s/m support group. Info: 395-4849.

Ashby, MA — Opening the Heart workshop for lesbian and gay couples. Spring Hill Institute. Sliding scale fee. Info: 864-9181.

Brookline — Shabbat service with Am Tikva. Social hour to follow. Workmen's Circle at 1762 Beacon St. 8PM. Please bring fruits, nuts, etc. Everyone welcome. Info: 782-8894.

Cambridge — "Living with Loss: A Gay/Lesbian Perspective," a support group. 11:30-1PM. Info: Hospice of Cambridge, 547-2620.

Boston — The Paulist Center presents a panel discussion moderated by Larry Kessler, "A Catholic Call to Compassion." 5 Park St. 7:30PM. Info: 742-4460.

7 saturday

Boston — The Paulist Center honors AIDS Action Committee director **Larry Kessler**. Liturgy, 6PM. Reception, 7:30PM. 5 Park St. Info: 742-4460.

Cambridge — "The Spinsters" benefit dance for disabled **Moving Violations** Motorcycle Club members. YWCA, 7 Temple St. 8PM. \$5-10. All welcome.

Worcester — Patty Larkin in concert. YWCA, 1 Salem Sq. 8PM. \$4 advance, \$5 at door. Info: 798-5450

Cambridge — DOB Wild Women watch eagles at **Quabbin Reservoir**. Meet at Old Cambridge Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. 9:30AM. Info: Marny, 625-7702.

8 sunday

Brookline — Brookline/Brighton/Allston Lesbian potluck: "Tupperware Party with a New Twist." 6PM. Info: 327-1404.

Cambridge — Annual Gay Community Volleyball Tournament, sponsored by Pleiades. Martin Luther King School, Putnam Ave., enter from Kinnaird St. Noon. Finals 7PM. Free. Info: 268-6313.

Brookline — "Progressive Perspectives on Sexual Politics," with Kate Ellis and David Scondras. Workman's Circle, 1762 Beacon St. 7:30PM. Free. Childcare provided. Info: 426-9026.

Boston — Black women writers celebrate Black History Month: Kate Rushin, Angela Bowen, Sharon Howell & Nancy Hughes. U-Mass., Arlington St. 7PM. \$4, if you can. Wheelchair accessible.

10 tuesday

Boston — Women's Caucus for Art annual conference. Boston Public Library, Copley Sq. 9AM-9PM. Info: Liana Cheney, 367-1679.

Cambridge — "Images of Women in Israeli Mass Media." by Gayle Dines-Levy. Sponsored by WITCH. Harvard Divinity School, Brown Room, 45 Francis St. 8PM. Info: 491-3549.

Boston — A service for all affected by AIDS, sponsored by the **Ecumenical Task Force on AIDS**. Marsh Chapel, Boston Univ. 7:30PM.

Cambridge — C. Everett Koop, U. S. Surgeon General, "AIDS: An Agenda for Action." J. F. K. School of Government, Harvard Sq. 8PM. Free. All welcome. Info: 495-1370.

11 wednesday

Boston — Boston NOW's Lesbian Rights Task Force. 971 Comm. Ave. 6:30PM. Info: 782-1056.

Cambridge — DOB rap for lesbians 35+, "How to Break the Ice." Old Cambridge Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. 8PM. Info: 661-3633.



Angela Bowen, 8 sunday

Boston — Gay & Lesbian Labor Activists (GALLANT) potluck. 145 Tremont, 7th floor. 6:30PM. Info: 422-4324.

12 thursday

Cambridge — Lucie Blue Tremblay in concert. Allegra Coffeehouse, YWCA, 7 Temple St. 7 & 9PM. \$7.50. Info: 547-1378.

13 friday

Boston — "Claiming Our Power," a talk by Valerie Russell sponsored by **Women's Theological Center**. Church of the Covenant, 67 Newbury St. 7PM. \$3-5.

Cambridge — Harvard GLSA Dance. 9PM-1AM. Info: 495-5476.

14 saturday

Jamaica Plain — Peacock Coffeehouse's 1st birthday. Performers include **Rob Krikorian**. First Church, 6 Eliot St. 8PM. \$4. Info: 522-2812.

Boston — The Gaylaxians celebrate their first anniversary. Sheraton Hotel during Boskone XXIV. 8PM. Info: P.O. Box 1051, Back Bay Annex, Boston 02117.

Cambridge — Jennifer Justice tells stories of lesbian romance & erotica, "Lavendar Hearts 3." First Church, 11 Garden St. 9PM. \$6 advance, \$7 at door. Also Sunday, 7PM. Info: 776-4514.

15 sunday

Providence, R.I. — Tea Dance Social Fundraiser to benefit the Gay & Lesbian Helpline. Mirabar, 245 Allens Ave. 1-5PM. \$5. Info: 751-3322.



Julie Christie in *Miss Mary*

Miss Mary. Directed by Maria Luisa Bemberg. With Julie Christie, Donald McIntyre, Sofia Viruboff and Barbara Bunge. At the USA Copley, Boston.

Miss Mary, the new film of Maria Luisa Bemberg whose *Camilla* was one of the most effective political/feminist films of the past few years, tries to deal with love, sex, social repression and the rise to power of Argentinian Juan Peron — all within the confines of a conventional historical romance. It begins in 1830 when the prim governess Miss Mary (Julie Christie) begins working for a slightly off-balance, very wealthy Argentinian family, and ends 15 years later on the eve of Peron's rise to power.

Lushly photographed and intelligently acted, the film tries to connect the fates of Miss Mary and the family to the changes in national politics. Clearly very ambitious, it is not always successful. By the end we are left wondering how Bemberg's political overlay actually relates to much of the plot or the characters. Some movies fail because they have no ideas; *Miss Mary* may have too many.

While *Miss Mary* is not a perfect film, Bemberg has created a complex portrait of people trapped in both a family's and a nation's history, juggling her ideas and characters with charm, if not skill.

— Michael Bronski

Seeing the Lite. A serial novel read aloud on National Public Radio, Sunday mornings.

Looking for something entertaining to fill your Sunday mornings? Try tuning in for the next installment of the serial novel *Seeing the Lite* on National Public Radio's "Weekend Edition" for some low key, tongue-in-cheek humor and a campy blast at the New Right. Each week, veteran NPR anchor Susan Stamberg hosts a well-known (or up-and-coming) writer presenting the next chapter in this satirical send-up of conservative America.

In the first chapter, gay author David Leavitt set the scene with his biting portrayal of Feona Mackenzie, a not so subtle conflation of Anita Bryant and Phyllis Schlafly who campaigns against Sin in its chief forms: feminism and homosexuality. Feona revels in recounting the stories of the radical feminist who infiltrated a beauty pageant only to discover how much she really wanted to win, and of Bobby Castleton, who was cured of homosexuality on the *Phil Donahue Show* through the ministrations of Feona. The paranoid Feona sees conspiracy and subversion on every slide, especially in the form of lesbian terrorists out to assassinate her. And she is not totally unjustified; in the second chapter, novelist and screenwriter Archibald MacLeish reveals that Bobby is a woman in drag and has infiltrated Feona's "God of America" crusade out of devotion to a mysterious "loved one."

If all this sounds a bit far-fetched and silly, it probably is. But in the hands of skillful writers, it is also a well-crafted bit of satire suited to the intellectual and political languor of a midwinter's Sunday morning. So catch the next episode of *Seeing the Lite*, and follow the intensifying saga of Feona of America and Bobby, the ex-fag.

— Dan Page

Calendar compiled by Terri L. Rutter

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